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Baltimore Mayor Lifts Curfew 6 Days After Riots

Brandon Payton, right, of Baltimore, fist-bumps a National Guardsman standing outside of City Hall in Baltimore. Six days after the death of Freddie Gray sparked riots in Baltimore, the city's mayor lifted a citywide curfew on Sunday, signaling an end to the extraordinary measures taken to ensure public safety amid an outcry over police practices.

(AP Photo/David Goldman)
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John Kerry tries to pacify Israeli worries over Iran deal



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry arrives at Nairobi Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Kenya, Sunday, May 3, 2015. Kerry is visiting Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Djibouti on his trip.

(AP Photo/Andrew Harnik, Pool)

IAN DEITCH
Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry sought to pacify Israeli worries over an emerging nuclear deal with Iran in an interview aired Sunday, dismissing some concerns as brought on by "hysteria" over the possible agreement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been one of the harshest critics the U.S.-led framework deal with the Islamic Republic, which offers it sanctions relief in exchange for scaling back its contested nuclear program.

Israel considers a nuclear-armed Iran an existential threat, citing hostile Iranian rhetoric toward the Jewish state, Iran's missile capa-

bilities and its support for violent militant groups. Iran says its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

Speaking to Israel's Channel 10 television, Kerry said the deal wouldn't affect American options to counter any possible effort by Iran to build atomic weapons.

"I say to every Israeli that today we have the ability to stop them if they decided to move quickly to a bomb and I absolutely guarantee that in the future we will have the ability to know what they are doing so that we can still stop them if they decided to move to a bomb," Kerry said.

Netanyahu believes the potential deal leaves intact too much of Iran's con-

tested nuclear program, including research facilities and advanced centrifuges capable of enriching uranium, a key ingredient in building an atomic bomb. "We will have inspectors in there every single day; that

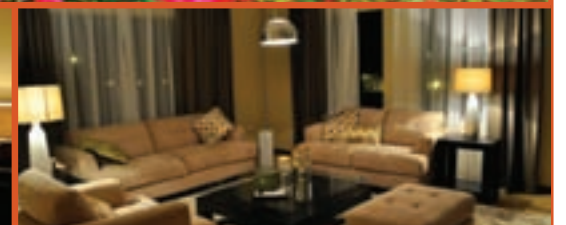
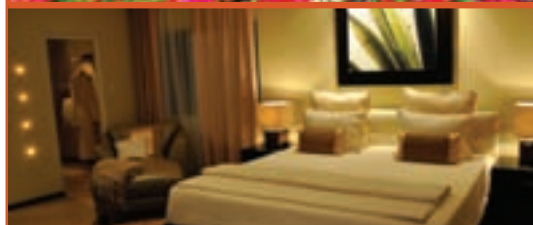
is not a 10-year deal that is forever," Kerry said. "There is a lot of hysteria about this deal."

Netanyahu's criticism has contributed to rising tensions between him and President Barack Obama.

"We think there needs to be a different deal, a better deal, and there are those that tell us this won't endanger Israel," Netanyahu said Sunday during a visit by U.S. Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio. □



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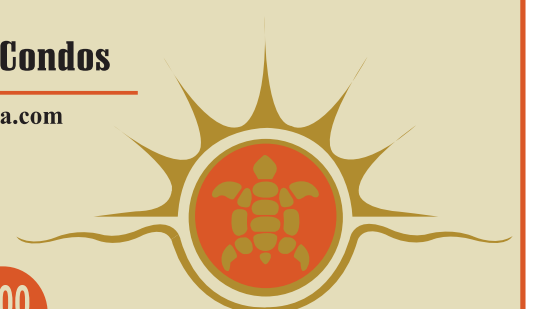


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Baltimore mayor lifts curfew 6 days after riots

JULIET LINDERMAN

BEN NUCKOLS

Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Six days after the death of a young black man at the hands of police sparked riots in Baltimore, the city's mayor lifted a citywide curfew on Sunday, signaling an end to the extraordinary measures taken to ensure public safety amid an outcry over police practices. Meanwhile, hundreds of jubilant people prayed and chanted for justice at a rally in front of City Hall organized by faith leaders. The rally comes days after the city's top prosecutor charged six officers involved in Freddie Gray's arrest. Baltimore's unrest came amid a fierce national debate over police

treatment of minorities and follows the deaths of unarmed African-Americans in New York, South Carolina and Ferguson, Missouri. The Rev. Lisa Weah, pastor of the New Bethlehem Baptist Church in Gray's neighborhood, said the message of equal justice for all must not be lost. "Our prayer is that Baltimore will be the model for the rest of the nation," she said. The order for residents to stay home between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. had been in place since Tuesday, and officials had planned to maintain it through Monday morning. Protests since last Monday's riots have been peaceful, and Friday's announcement of charges against the offi-



A woman stands on a car during a party in the street in Baltimore. Six days after the death of Freddie Gray sparked riots in Baltimore, the city's mayor lifted a citywide curfew on Sunday, signaling an end to the extraordinary measures taken to ensure public safety amid an outcry over police practices.

(AP Photo/David Goldman)

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cers eased tensions. Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake said in a statement that she didn't want the curfew to continue any longer than necessary. "My number one priority in instituting a curfew was to ensure the public peace, safety, health and welfare of Baltimore citizens," the Democratic mayor said. "It was not an easy decision, but one I felt was necessary to help our city restore calm." Gray died after suffering a broken neck while inside a police van. On Friday, State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby filed charges against the six officers involved in his arrest, transport and fatal injury. The officers face charges ranging from manslaughter to second-degree murder. Mosby, who deemed the death a homicide, said Gray's neck was broken because he was placed head-first into a police van while in handcuffs and

later leg shackles where he was left to slam against the walls of the small metal compartment. Police said the officers who arrested Gray ignored his cries for help because they thought he was faking his injuries. He was repeatedly denied medical attention. At a demonstration on Saturday that was billed as a "victory rally," speakers expressed gratitude to Mosby for her decision. "Every prosecutor should have such backbone," said Malik Shabazz, president of Black Lawyers for Justice and one of the demonstration's organizers. More than 200 people were arrested during Monday's riots, and more than half of those were released without charges. Rawlings-Blake said during an appearance Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press" that authorities are combing through videotapes to identify looters and charge them. □



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Suspect charged in New York City officer shooting

J. DAVID GOODMAN
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NEW YORK - The Queens man suspected of shooting and critically wounding a New York City police officer who had driven up in an unmarked car to question him was charged with attempted murder Sunday, officials said.

The plainclothes officer, Brian Moore, 25, was shot in the face Saturday afternoon in Queens. He remained in critical but stable condition Sunday at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center, where he underwent surgery late Saturday night, the police said.

The suspect, Demetrius Blackwell, 35, was also charged with one count of assault and two counts of criminal possession of a weapon. He was set to be arraigned late Sunday in Queens Criminal Court.

By Sunday afternoon, however, the gun used in the shooting had yet to be found. Dozens of officers could be seen on rooftops

poking into gutters, raking through grass or taking apart sewer grates in search of the weapon in a tight radius of homes and yards near where the shooting occurred. Crime scene investigators set up a tent outside a home where Blackwell was arrested, a block from the spot where officials said he turned and fired on Moore and Moore's partner, Erik Jansen, as they approached him in a car. "It's a tough search," said Stephen Davis, the department's top spokesman. When the shooting took place around 6:15 p.m. Saturday, Moore and Jansen, both anti-crime officers, were in a car with Moore at the wheel, patrolling an area that had seen a spate of burglaries. They were on the lookout for activity associated with burglaries, Davis said, among other crime conditions, when they noticed Blackwell adjusting an object in his waistband and approached in their car from



Demetrius Blackwell appears in court for his arraignment Sunday, May 3, 2015, in the Queens borough of New York. Blackwell who is accused of shooting a New York City police officer in the head was ordered held without bail Sunday on charges including attempted murder.

(Theodore Parisienne/The Daily News via AP, Pool)

behind. Officers had made several attempts to speak with Blackwell in connection with a violent episode in November when, the

police said, he brandished a gun and hurled rocks at a neighbor's home before smashing the windshield of a parked car with a brick.

But it was his suspicious movements on the street that drew the officers to him Saturday, the police said. □

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Problems facing US poor creep into 2016 presidential race

JULIE PACE

AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a presidential campaign where candidates are jockeying to be champions of the middle class and asking wealthy people for money, the problems facing the poor are now part of the debate.

Tensions in places such as Baltimore and Ferguson, Missouri, have prompted candidates to explore the complicated relationship between poor communities and the police, and the deep-seated issues that have trapped many of the 45 million people who live in poverty in the United States. A frustrated President Barack Obama

challenged the nation to do "some soul-searching" after riots in Baltimore followed the death of 25-year-old Freddie Gray in police custody. There have been other deadly altercations between police and black men or boys in Ferguson, New York's Staten Island, Cleveland and North Charleston, South Carolina. Addressing the long-running economic, education and security troubles in underprivileged neighborhoods is a challenge with few easily agreed upon solutions.

"I'm under no illusion that out of this Congress we're going to get massive investments in urban communities," Obama said. "But if we really want to



Republican presidential hopeful Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky. speaks in Waukee, Iowa. Paul has long called for overhauling criminal sentencing procedures that he says disproportionately imprison low-income black men.

(AP Photo/Nati Harnik)

solve the problem, if our society really wanted to solve the problem, we could." To some of the Republicans running to replace Obama, his call for spending more money in poor areas underscores the problem with many current anti-poverty programs. The Republicans largely oppose new domestic spending and party officials often say federally run programs are bloated and inefficient.

"At what point do you have to conclude that the top-down government poverty programs have failed?" said Jeb Bush, son and brother of former presidents and expected to be a formidable presidential candidate. "I think we need to be engaged in this debate as conservatives and say that there's a bottom-up approach." Republicans have struggled in recent years to overcome the perception that the party has little interest in the plight of the poor.

Mitt Romney, the Republican presidential nominee

in 2012, was criticized for saying he was "not concerned about the very poor" and that it was not his job to worry about the 47 percent of Americans who he said "believe that government has a responsibility to care for them." More than 60 percent of voters who made less than \$30,000 per year backed Obama over Romney in that campaign, according to exit polls.

Blacks and Hispanics, who overwhelmingly backed Obama in the past two presidential elections, are most likely to be poor. According to the census, about 27 percent of blacks and 25 percent of Hispanics were poor in 2012, compared with 12.7 percent of whites. Hispanics are now the biggest U.S. minority group and Republican leaders have warned the party risks its long-term future if it doesn't do a better job courting them.

Bush has been among the most vocal Republicans discussing the need to lift the poor out of poverty and

reduce income inequality, though he has yet to flesh out many of his policy proposals. He has been most specific about the need for greater educational choices and opportunities. Bush frequently cites his work in Florida, where he expanded charter schools, backed voucher programs and promoted high testing standards.

Kentucky Republican Sen. Rand Paul has long called for overhauling criminal sentencing procedures that he says disproportionately imprison low-income black men. He has promoted "economic freedom zones" where taxes would be lowered in areas with high long-term unemployment in order to stimulate growth and development. Paul, who has made a point of reaching out to black communities, has drawn criticism for comments he made during the Baltimore unrest. In a radio interview, Paul said he had been on a train that went through the city and was "glad the train didn't stop." Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida also has talked frequently about the poor. His anti-poverty proposals include consolidating many federal programs to help the poor into a "flex fund" that states would then manage.

Democrats, too, are trying to incorporate plans for tackling poverty into economic campaign messages that otherwise center on the middle class.

Following the Baltimore turmoil, Hillary Rodham Clinton made a plea for criminal justice changes that could aid urban communities. Among her ideas: equipping every police department with body cameras for officers. □

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Google embeds engineers in schools as professors



Google software engineer and Google In Residence Sabrina Williams, right, talks with students including, from left, freshmen Lucretia Williams, Alanna Walton, and Christopher Hocutt, during a Google Student Development class on Impostor Syndrome at Howard University in Washington.

(AP Photo/Molly Riley)

M. MENDOZA

AP National Writer

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif.

(AP) — Howard University freshman Alanna Walton knew something was different about the professor teaching her introduction to computer science course.

First, there was her name: Professor Sabrina. She was an African American woman, kept office hours until 2 a.m. if that's what it took to see everyone, and had an additional title: Google In Residence.

"It was an awesome class," said Alanna who has already chosen her major at the Washington D.C.-based university: computer science.

In ongoing efforts to diversify Silicon Valley's tech sector, Google is embedding engineers at a handful of Historically Black Colleges and Universities where they teach, mentor and advise on curriculum.

Today 35 percent of African Americans receiving computer science degrees come from those schools, but they don't make their way to Silicon Valley's top tech firms. Google is typical — about 1 percent of its technical staffers are black.

Last year a push by civil rights advocate Jesse Jackson prompted several dozen tech firms to release workforce diversity data which showed underrepresentation of African Americans, Latinos and women in the field.

In response, businesses, universities and community leaders have launched initiatives aimed at diversifying their ranks, both ethnically and by gender. The Anita Borg Institute and the National Center for Women and Information Technology have partnered with many companies to support female engineers. Facebook offers "Facebook University," an internship for low income minority college freshmen interested in computer science. Intel has committed \$300 million over the next five years toward diversifying its workforce, while Apple has a \$50 million partnership with nonprofits to support women and minority computer science majors.

Google decided to go to the source, sending a handful of software engineers to teach at Howard, Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia, Fisk University in Nashville, and Spelman and Morehouse colleges in Atlanta.

They taught introductory courses, but they also trained students on everything from how to send a professional email to how to make it through a software engineering job interview, which can involve a lot of time solving coding questions at a white board. This summer, 30 of those students will be Google interns. And Howard University graduating senior Christopher Hocutt, 21, whose friends jokingly call him Mr. Google, will be starting at

the company full-time. Hocutt said the Google In Residence professors convinced him to apply.

"What they discovered was a lot of people weren't even applying to Google because we didn't believe we were skilled enough to do it," he said. "Once we realized we have the skills, we just needed mentorship to make our resume look good, get through the interview, have confidence to try."

Google software engineer Sabrina Williams, who took a semester away from her Mountain View campus this year to mentor and teach at Howard, is thrilled to see her student becoming a colleague.

"I'm inspired," she said. "Change is slow, this is going to take time, but I think

what's interesting about this program is that it's a different way of attacking the problem of lack of diversity in tech."

Fifteen years ago, Williams was the only female African American computer science major at Stanford University. "I kind of felt awkward so I kind of hid a lot," she said. "It was very difficult."

She said that while "teaching is hard" and the hours at Howard were grueling, she welcomed the opportunity to offer students an experience different from her own. This included taking female computer scientists aside early in the semester, telling them she was available for any questions, and encouraging them to support each other. □

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British leaders in final push before May 7 election

SYLVIA HUI

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — With four days to go till Britain's election, leaders of the country's main political parties were using the long week-end to make a final push to win over undecided voters before the vote.

Prime Minister David Cameron and his rivals were out Sunday rallying support for the May 7 election, widely expected to be the most unpredictable in decades. Most opinion polls suggest that the ruling Conservatives and their main opponents, the Labour Party, are neck and neck, each

hovering around the 30 to 35 percent mark. If no party wins a majority, some form of coalition government appears likely.

In a speech to activists, Cameron said he is the "only option" for prime minister to avoid a power-sharing deal between Labour and the separatist Scottish National Party — a "calamity for our country," he warned.

Cameron and other party leaders set out their "red lines," or issues they say they wouldn't compromise on should they enter into a governing pact with another party.

The prime minister insisted that if his party wins power again, he wouldn't bargain away their insistence to hold an "in-out" referendum on Britain's European Union membership. Cameron has long said that he wanted Britons to decide whether they want to stay or leave the EU by the end of 2017.

"Come what may, I will not be PM of a government that does not deliver that referendum," he said.

He also appealed to supporters of two smaller parties, the U.K. Independence Party and the Liberal Democrats, to vote Conservative to keep him in office.

Meanwhile, in a bid to show his political commitments, Labour leader and



Prime Minister David Cameron poses for a photograph with a member of the public as he arrives to watch the Tour de Yorkshire cycle race pass through Addingham near Ilkley, during General Election campaigning in the lead up to the parliamentary elections on May 7, Addingham, England, Sunday May 3, 2015.

(AP Photo/Jon Super)

aspiring prime minister Ed Miliband unveiled what election promises his party had carved in stone — literally.

Miliband showed off an

eight foot tall limestone monument listing his key manifesto promises, including immigration control and higher living standards for working families. □

Nepal:

Bureaucracy blamed as relief supplies pile up

GARDINER HARRIS

© 2015 New York Times

KATHMANDU, Nepal - Relief supplies for earthquake victims have been piling up at the airport and in warehouses here because of bureaucratic interference by Nepalese authorities who insist that standard customs inspections and other procedures be followed, even in an emergency, Western government and aid organization officials said Sunday.

"The bottleneck was the fact that the bureaucratic procedures were just so heavy," Jamie McGoldrick, the U.N. resident coordinator, said in an interview. "So many layers of government and so many departments

involved, so many different line ministries involved. We don't need goods sitting in Kathmandu warehouses. We don't need goods sitting at the airport. We need them up in the affected areas."

The U.S. ambassador to Nepal, Peter W. Bodde, said he had spoken to Nepal's prime minister, Sushil Koirala, about the issue and "he assured me that all the red tape will be stopped."

Also Sunday, three survivors were pulled from rubble in the Sindhupalchok district, an especially hard-hit and largely rural area north of Kathmandu.

Officials of aid organizations and Western governments have been grum-

bling about the Nepalese government since the magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck the country April 25, killing more than 7,000 people. Early complaints accused the government of all but disappearing, a criticism that even top officials here acknowledged was fair.

"Everyone was panicked, everything was closed, and we all tried to save our own lives," Purna Bahadur Khadka, joint general secretary of the governing Nepali Congress, said in an interview at the prime minister's official residence. "And some critics can say there was no proper coordination for the first two days." □

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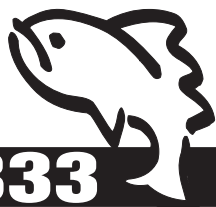


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Merkel joins survivors, US vets to mark Dachau liberation

C. NOELTING
G. MOULSON

Associated Press

DACHAU, Germany (AP) —

It was a shocking, horrifying "beautiful day."

Survivors and liberators alike recalled on Sunday the horror of the Dachau concentration camp and the overwhelming relief of its liberation 70 years ago. German Chancellor Angela Merkel pledged to keep alive the memory of Nazi crimes and give no quarter to present-day discrimination or anti-Semitism.

Dachau, near Munich, was the first concentration camp the Nazis set up — a few weeks after Adolf Hitler took power in 1933. Before it was liberated by U.S. troops on April 29, 1945, more than 200,000 people from across Europe were held there and over 40,000 prisoners died.

"When we entered the camp exactly 70 years ago, it was a terrible shock to see how much you, the survivors, had suffered from starvation, disease, brutality and freezing conditions," Alan Lukens, who



German Chancellor Angela Merkel, third left, and camp survivor Max Mannheimer, fourth from left in wheel chair, lay a wreath at the crematory of the former Nazi concentration camp in Dachau, southern Germany, Sunday, May 3, 2015 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the camp.

(Andreas Gebert/Pool Photo via AP)

entered Dachau as a U.S. army private in 1945, said at the anniversary ceremony at the former camp.

"But we will never forget your excitement and ours as we entered the camp and were overwhelmed by you, as you hugged us and

brought out a hand-sewn American flag which you had hidden for the occasion," said Lukens, who later became a U.S. diplomat. Alongside the joy, he remembered that "SS snipers, after hanging out white surrender flags, shot several

American GIs as we entered the camp."

Former prisoner Jean Samuel remembered Dachau's liberation as "the most beautiful day of my life." He described inmates from many nations welcoming the American liberators

at the camp's assembly ground.

"An immense crowd acclaimed them, and by some sort of magic the flags of all the countries fluttered in the wind," Samuel said. He recalled that, after showering and being de-loused, "I felt like a living being again."

Returning to France at age 21, Samuel said he wanted to forget his experience and get on with his life. "I put Dachau in a corner of my memory," he said.

After retiring, however, he decided to speak out as "a witness of the unspeakable" and fulfill a duty to keep the memories of what happened at Dachau alive.

That duty has been underlined by the still-unsolved theft of the wrought-iron camp gate bearing the slogan "Arbeit macht frei," or "Work sets you free." A replica was put in place on Wednesday, the anniversary of the camp's liberation, ahead of the commemoration traditionally held on the Sunday following April 29. □

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Arab coalition 'reconnaissance' troops land in Yemen

AHMED AL-HAJ
Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — With helicopter gunships hovering overhead, at least 20 troops from a Saudi-led Arab coalition, including Yemeni expatriates, came ashore Sunday in the southern port city of Aden on what military officials called a "reconnaissance" mission, as fighting raged between Iranian-backed Shiite rebels and forces loyal to the nation's exiled president.

The landing was the first of its kind since the start of the Saudi-led air campaign against the rebels and their allies — forces loyal to ousted President Ali Abdullah Saleh — who have



Officials of Felix Airways, a domestic airline, inspect a plane destroyed by Saudi-led airstrikes, at the Sanaa International airport, in Yemen. With helicopter gunships hovering overhead, at least 20 troops from a Saudi-led Arab coalition, including Yemeni expatriates, came ashore Sunday in the southern port city of Aden on what military officials called a "reconnaissance" mission.

(AP Photo/Hani Mohammed)

captured most of northern Yemen and marched on southern provinces over the past year.

The objective of the landing was not immediately clear, but Yemeni military officials said the coalition troops would attempt to better organize and train forces loyal to the country's internationally recognized leader, President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, as well as identify an area that could serve as a "green zone" from which Hadi and his government could operate when they return to Yemen.

At the top of that list, said the officials, is the al-Bu-reqah area west of Aden, which stretches for about

15 kilometers (about 10 miles) along the coast and is home to a major oil refinery and large fuel tanks.

The Western-backed Hadi fled Aden to neighboring Saudi Arabia in March, just a few weeks after he fled the capital, Sanaa, which was captured by the rebels, known as Houthis, in September.

Saudi officials declined to immediately comment on Sunday's landing. However, military and security officials have repeatedly said a ground operation would follow the Saudi-led air campaign that began March 26, after the military capabilities of the Houthis and their allies had been sufficiently weakened. □



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Israeli Ethiopian protest against racism turns violent

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Several thousand people from Israel's Jewish Ethiopian minority protested in Tel Aviv against racism and police brutality on Sunday, shutting down a major highway and clashing with police on horseback long into the night.

The protest was mostly peaceful during the day, but by nightfall became violent with at least 20 officers hurt and "multiple protesters" arrested, Police Spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said.

Protesters threw rocks and bottles at officers in riot gear. Police deployed officers on horseback and used stun grenades to try and control the crowds in central Tel Aviv. Local media reported protesters tipped over a police vehicle and set fires near city hall.

Channel 2 TV said the protesters came from all over the country.

"I am here to fight for our rights," a woman named Batel from the northern city of Nazareth Illit told the station.

"I don't want to be beaten by police," said the 21-

year-old, who didn't give her last name. "My parents didn't immigrate here for nothing. I want equality."

Simmering frustrations among Israel's Ethiopian community boiled over when footage emerged of an Ethiopian Israeli in an army uniform being beaten by police last week. Thousands of Ethiopian Jews live in Israel, many of them secretly airlifted into the country in 1984 and 1990, but their absorption into Israeli society has been difficult. Although they are Jewish, Ethiopian community members complain of racism, lack of opportunity in Israeli society, endemic poverty and routine police harassment.

Police chief Yohanan Danino told Channel 10 TV that "the use of violence by a small minority of the many protesters does not serve their struggle." He added, "Whoever harms police or civilians will be brought to justice."

Activists told the station they don't want violence to escalate to the level seen in Baltimore where the death of a man in police custody sparked riots. □



Israel's Jewish Ethiopians block highway during a protest against racism and police brutality in Tel Aviv, Israel, Sunday, May 3, 2015. Several thousand people, mostly from Israel's Jewish Ethiopian minority, protested in Tel Aviv against racism and police brutality on Sunday shutting down a major highway and scuffling with police.

(AP Photo/Oded Balilty)

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Venezuela raises minimum wage 30% amid inflation

JOSHUA GOODMAN

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— President Nicolas Maduro raised Venezuela's minimum wage this weekend for the second time this year to help workers being battered by the world's highest inflation.

Speaking at a May Day rally, the socialist leader said he is boosting the minimum wage and pensions for retirees by 30 percent, with two-thirds of the increase coming this month and the rest on July 1. He also said he would raise salaries for government employees and military personnel.

The wage increase, while a welcome relief for many workers, fell short of expectations that the embattled Maduro might expand state control of the slumping economy.

In recent days, Maduro has stepped up attacks on the country's business elite, prompting the head of the nation's biggest food maker, Empresas Polar, to publish a rare public letter to the president calling for dialogue.

"Sometimes we don't see



An opposition demonstrator with a Venezuelan national flag draped around her shoulders, holds a sign with a message that reads in Spanish; "Son, I keep fighting for Venezuela, so that you don't leave it, or sink with it," during a May Day march in Caracas, Venezuela.

(AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

the face of the monster that wants to destroy the economy and irritate the people," Maduro told supporters at the weekend rally.

He promised more measures in the coming days that he said would wrest control of the economy

from the "oligarchs" and "big wigs" who he accuses of trying to topple the government.

The pay increase follows a 15 percent hike in January and will take Venezuela's minimum wage to 7,324 bolivars a month. That is about \$1,162 at the coun-

try's official exchange rate but less than \$30 at the black market rate widely used to set many prices.

Economists say the wage increases are only likely to feed the inflationary spiral that coupled with widespread shortages of goods is wreaking havoc on Venezuelans as the oil-dependent economy struggles.

Inflation last year totaled 69 percent, the highest in the world. And with oil prices down by a third from a year ago, the amount of dollars available to pay for importing goods ranging from car parts to toilet paper has fallen sharply, leaving reserves of international currencies at their lowest level in nearly 12 years. □

CARIBBEAN News Briefs

Cuba: Fidel Castro meets with foreign minister of Japan

HAVANA (AP) — An official Cuban newspaper reports that Fidel Castro joined his brother, President Raul Castro, for a rare appearance to meet with Japan's foreign minister. The daily Juventud Rebelde reported Sunday the 88-year-old former leader spoke with Fumio Kishido about improving relations between the two nations. It did not specify when the meeting occurred. Kishido arrived in Cuba on Friday with a delegation of business leaders. He is the first Japanese foreign minister to visit the island.

Fidel Castro handed power to his younger brother in 2006 after suffering from poor health. He has made almost no public appearances in several months. The last photo of him to appear in Cuban media was published on April 20 when the official daily Granma reported the former president had voted from his home. □

Guyana military, police cast votes before election

GEORGETOWN, Guyana (AP) — Guyana's government is allowing soldiers, police officers and military officials to vote ahead of the South American country's general election so they can work that day. Those voters began forming long lines at the 66 polling stations that opened early Saturday across Guyana. Chief Elections Officer Keith Lowenfield said voting was going smoothly. □



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Loyal Visitors Honored at the Divi Phoenix Beach Resort



PALM BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a group of loyal and friendly visitors of Aruba at the Divi Phoenix Beach Resort, as Distinguished Visitors and Ambassadors of Goodwill. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10-to-19 and 20-to-35 consecutive years.

The honorees were Mr. Trip and Mrs. Gail Rose of Virginia, Mr. Gary and Mrs. Diana Kaczmarek of Jefferson, Massachusetts, Mr. Frank and Mrs. Deborah Hurd of Acton, Maine, and last but not least a big group of friends and family



that travel together every year, including Sophia Paulin, Deanna Paulin, Lucas Pualin, Jackson Puzzo and Jordan Puzzo.

All the honorees are loyal members of the Divi Phoenix

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The certificates were presented by Mr. Ernest Giel

representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Mrs. Avril, Ms. Pearl Lake and GM Mr. Gerith Griffith, representing the Divi Phoenix Beach Resort. □



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Loyal Visitors Honored at the Tropicana Resort and Casino



EAGLE BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring two very nice couples as Ambassadors of Goodwill at the Tropicana Resort and Casino. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 20-to-34 consecutive years. The honorees were Mr. Francis Gould and Mrs. Pat Hincley of Burlington, Massa-



chusetts and Mr. Alfonso and Mrs. Maria Alvares of Medellin, Colombia. Both couples love Aruba very much because of the friendly people, the weather, the beaches, the restaurants and the Tropicana Casino. Being on Aruba and staying at the Tropicana is paradise for them, and the wonderful staff of

the resort is like family to them. The certificates were presented at the recently renovated Tropicana Casino by Mr. Ernest Giel representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Ms. Nelida Rodriguez, Ms. Jacky Feliciano, friends of the honorees and Mr. Richard Roy GM at the Tropicana Resort and Casino. □



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nominating factor of the guests includes the enjoyment of life, in particular the good things, such as great bistro food, wonderful drinks and a relaxed, happy atmosphere. Side Bar is the name of a stylish, hip restaurant on the side of the Renaissance Marketplace; just hop inside, sit at the bar or on the amazing porch and enjoy! One of the guests

was overheard remarking: "I was wondering how one could find niche for a new restaurant on Aruba, but I believe Niels has found it with Sidebar. The combination gourmet burger and aged Bourbons is one that we don't have yet on the island. This bistro is going to soar." Others agreed and they added that the food, atmosphere and the staff is absolutely terrific!





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BEST IN CLASS

Mayweather pockets \$100M after beating Pacquiao

Floyd Mayweather Jr. celebrates after his welterweight title fight against Manny Pacquiao, from the Philippines, on Saturday, May 2, 2015 in Las Vegas.
Associated Press
Page 20



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McIlroy top of the world at Match Play Championship

DOUG FERGUSON
AP Golf Writer
SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Rory McIlroy, of Northern Ireland, reacts after making an eagle putt on the 18th green of TPC Harding Park to win his semifinal match against Jim Furyk at the Match Play Championship golf tournament Sunday, May 3, 2015, in San Francisco
Associated Press.

Rory McIlroy had to work harder than ever to win the Match Play Championship. No one ever had to play seven matches in five days, and McIlroy won them all in the new round-robin format. He had to beat three players on the same day, a first in the 17 years of this tournament. And three times, he stood on the 17th tee trailing.

McIlroy didn't need a comeback in the final Sunday afternoon. He won four straight holes on the front nine against an errant Gary Woodland, survived a brief scare and wound up with a 4-and-2 victory for his second World Golf Championship.

"I knew it wasn't going to be easy," McIlroy said. Three weeks after Jordan Spieth won the Masters and emerged as the most likely rival, McIlroy reminded the world of his No. 1 ranking.

He became the first No. 1 seed since Tiger Woods in 2008 to win the most unpredictable event in golf and collect his 10th PGA Tour title. He joined Woods (24) and Jack Nicklaus (12) as the only players with at least 10 PGA Tour victories at age 25 or younger. McIlroy turns 26 on Monday.

"Every time I have a win, I keep hearing those guys' names come up," McIlroy said. "It's great to be mentioned with the likes of Tiger and Jack, the two greatest players that I think have every played this game. I'm on my journey. I'll see where I get to."

It was quite a journey at TPC Harding Park, especially on Sunday.

McIlroy had to start at 6:45 a.m. to complete his

quarterfinal match against Paul Casey. Without hitting a putt on the practice green (only on the chipping green, which didn't have the same speed), he put perfect pace on a 60-foot eagle putt from the fringe for a short birdie that Casey couldn't match in losing in 22 holes.

In the semifinals against hard-nosed Jim Furyk, McIlroy was 1 down when he closed birdie-birdie-eagle for a 1-up victory. He squared the match with a 7-iron to 4 feet and closed out Furyk with a 45-foot eagle putt across the 18th green.

No such theatrics were needed against Woodland.

After a scrappy start by both — two holes were halved with bogeys — Woodland began missing fairways and McIlroy took advantage. He won four straight holes, three of them with birdies, to build a 4-up lead. That was the margin until McIlroy began making a few mistakes of his own.

He made bogey on No. 11 with a poor bunker shot. He failed to make birdie on the reachable par-4 12th with a wild tee shot. And his indifferent chip left of the 13th green led to another bogey. Woodland had a 4-foot par putt to reach 1 down with plenty of golf course left.

Woodland ran it over the right edge, and momentum shifted squarely back to McIlroy.

"My putt drops on 13 and it's a different ball game," Woodland said. "But I missed that one. And he was like a shark. Smelled blood, and it was game over quickly." □

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NBA Playoff Capsules

Beal leads well-rested Wizards past Hawks in Game 1

The Associated Press
ATLANTA (AP) — ATLANTA (AP) — Bradley Beal shook off a sprained ankle to score 28 points and the Washington Wizards remained unbeaten in the postseason, knocking off the top-seeded Atlanta Hawks 104-98 Sunday in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference semifinals. Taking advantage of a week off since their sweep of Toronto in the opening round, the Wizards were down the Hawks in the fourth quarter. Otto Porter scored a couple of big baskets coming down the stretch and Marcin Gortat sealed it with a lay-in off a pass from John Wall with 14.6 seconds remaining. The Wizards became the first team in NBA history to win four straight Game 1s on the road, improving to 8-1 in the playoffs away from D.C. over the last two years. After racing to a 37-26 lead after the first quarter, Atlanta couldn't make anything

in the fourth. Even with plenty of good looks, the Hawks shot just 5 of 28 in the final period, including 1 of 10 from 3-point range. DeMarre Carroll had another big game for Atlanta with 24 points, but he went scoreless in the final quarter. He had plenty of company. Kyle Korver made only 5 of 15 shots, Al Horford was 7 of 19, and Jeff Teague went 4 of 14.

WARRIORS 101, GRIZZLIES 86
OAKLAND, California (AP) — Stephen Curry had 22 points and seven assists, and Golden State were down undermanned Memphis in Game 1 of the Western Conference semifinals Sunday. Klay Thompson added 18 points and Draymond Green scored 16 to help the top-seeded Warriors roll to their 21st straight victory at raucous Oracle Arena. They led by nine at the half, 20 late in the third quarter and never let the Grizzlies build any momentum in the fourth. Game 2



Washington Wizards guard Bradley Beal (3) drives past Atlanta Hawks guard Kent Bazemore (24) in the second half of an NBA second-round basketball playoff series game, Sunday, May 3, 2015, in Atlanta.

Associated Press

of the best-of-seven series is Tuesday night in Oakland. Marc Gasol had 21 points and nine rebounds, and Zach Randolph finished

with 20 points and nine rebounds for a Memphis team missing point guard Mike Conley.

He sat on the bench in a suit, his left eye still swollen, as he continues to recover from surgery to repair broken bones in his face. □

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Mayweather takes his \$100 million check and runs

TIM DAHLBERG
AP Boxing Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The check was for \$100 million, a payday so mind boggling that Floyd Mayweather Jr. couldn't help but show it to a few reporters when the night was done.

"No pictures, though," Mayweather said, sliding the check out of an envelope. "Don't want any pictures of it."

The check will soon be cashed, adding to the millions Mayweather already has stashed in his bank accounts. It was actually just a down payment for his night's work, which could total more than \$200 million by the time pay-per-view sales are tallied up.

The richest fight ever wasn't the best fight ever, but that wasn't entirely Mayweather's fault. He did what he usually does Saturday night against Manny Pacquiao in a win that cemented his legacy as the best of his generation, even if he didn't win any new fans doing it.

Still, the fight will be a tough act to follow if only because of the staggering money it brought in. Hard to imagine Mayweather



Floyd Mayweather Jr., left, holds up the title belt next to referee Kenny Bayless after his win against Manny Pacquiao, from the Philippines, in their welterweight title fight on Saturday, May 2, 2015 in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

fighting for a paltry \$30 million or \$40 million after a night he made history with the richest single payday any athlete of any sport has made.

He says he'll fight once more in September, then hang up the gloves. Mayweather says it's time to enjoy the fruits of his labor from a sport that has consumed his life since he was a kid throwing punches in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

"I don't really think I'll miss the sport," Mayweather said. "I don't even watch

boxing. At one particular time I loved the sport of boxing. I wanted to go to every fight and wanted to be at every boxing event. But I just lost the love for the sport." Before a well-heeled crowd of 16,507 that cheered every time Pacquiao threw a punch, Mayweather dominated late once again to pull out a decision win that seemed closer in the ring than it did on the scorecards. Pacquiao even thought he won, though punch stats showed Mayweather land-

ing far more punches and even throwing more than the usually frenetic Filipino. Pacquiao would blame a shoulder injury suffered in training last month for not being able to throw more right hands. His handlers would blame Nevada boxing officials for not allowing him a shot to numb the shoulder just before the fight, though the excuse rang hollow.

"I cannot use a lot of my right hand but the fight was still good," Pacquiao said. "What we wanted to do we couldn't do because of my shoulder. But he's fast, he's a good boxer. Give the credit to him. He won tonight."

Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, said his fighter would like a rematch, but there is little chance of that. Not with Pacquiao's shoulder injury, and certainly not after the perfect financial storm of a fight that cannot be replicated.

Pacquiao likely made \$100 million himself for the fight that packed the MGM Grand arena with celebrities, sports stars and people paying as much as \$40,000 for ringside seats. The bout was delayed for about a half hour because pay-per-view sales were overwhelming cable and satellite systems, a good omen for the payday of both fighters.

But while Pacquiao was the crowd favorite, Mayweather was the masterful boxer. He may not have ended the career of the remarkable career of the Filipino who once sold doughnuts

on the streets to survive, but it's doubtful Pacquiao can continue as a big pay-per-view much longer.

"I did my best, but my best wasn't good enough," Pacquiao said. "I fought a good fight."

Mayweather fought a good fight, too, even if it wasn't the crowd pleasing affair fans wanted. He used his reach advantage to land jab after jab, and was so elusive that Pacquiao was only able to land one of every five punches he threw, including only 18 of 193 right jabs.

It was another great defensive performance from a fighter who knows just what he has to do to win. Mayweather remained unbeaten in 48 fights in a career that has now stretched 19 years. "I knew I had him from round one," Mayweather said. "I went out there and felt him out. I wanted to see certain moves. Everything is a calculated move. I'm 10 steps ahead of any other fighter." If Mayweather is serious about hanging up the gloves after one more fight, he'll go into the history books as the best of his generation — and certainly the richest. Because he doesn't take chances and turns fights into chess matches, though, he's not going to be mentioned on any short list of all-time greats even while he insists he's the best ever.

Mayweather says he plans to give up all three welterweight titles he holds so other fighters have a chance at them. □



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Dale Earnhardt Jr. cruises to 1st Talladega win since 2004

JENNA FRYER

AP Auto Racing Writer

TALLADEGA, Ala. (AP) —

At a track that has always been good to his family, in front of an adoring crowd that so clearly favors him over everyone else in the field, Dale Earnhardt Jr. cruised to an emotional first win of the season.

NASCAR's most popular driver won Sunday at Talladega Superspeedway, where he received a thunderous ovation as he pumped his fist outside the car window during a slow victory lap.



Dale Earnhardt Jr. celebrates in Victory Lane after winning the Talladega 500 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series auto race at Talladega Superspeedway, Sunday, May 3, 2015, in Talladega, Ala.

Associated Press

He stopped at the flag stand to grab the checkered flag and flew it out his car window as he savored his trip around the track and into victory lane.

It is Earnhardt's sixth victory at Talladega — but first since 2004 — and he choked back tears after he climbed from his No. 88 Chevrolet.

"It's just real emotional. I haven't won here in a long time. It was my daddy's birthday a couple of days ago, and I'm just real emotional, man," he said.

The late Dale Earnhardt, a first ballot Hall of Fame inductee, won 10 times at the Alabama track. He would have celebrated his 64th birthday Wednesday. Earnhardt Jr. won four consecutive races at Talladega from 2001, after his father's death in the season-opening Daytona 500, through 2003. He then finished second in back-to-back Talladega races before grabbing his fifth victory in 2004.

But his dominance ended that season, then came several years of slumping results on the track. He finally turned it around last year with a victory in the season-opening Daytona 500, but poor strategy in this

race last year cost him any shot at the victory.

His fan base was livid over Earnhardt's decision to lay back in the field last May, and he vowed to not do it again. On Saturday, he admitted he feels a sense of responsibility to his fans to perform well at Talladega. Earnhardt delivered Sunday, leading a race-high 67 laps and easily winning when no one from a single-file line of cars behind him could challenge him.

The win almost certainly put him in the Chase for the Sprint Cup championship, and was Earnhardt's first with new crew chief Greg Ives.

"Everything is just so good for me right now, my personal life, my racing, the team I'm with, I don't know why," Earnhardt said. "I don't feel like I deserve it. I just feel overcome, you know, with a lot of emotion."

Jimmie Johnson finished second as Hendrick Motorsports dominated the race. But Johnson couldn't pull out of line to attempt a pass on Earnhardt, who was watching his mirror carefully to see who from the line would make a move.

He thought for sure it would be Johnson.

"I didn't know what he had up his sleeve, maybe they got busy behind him and he couldn't form a charge," said Earnhardt, who was worried in the closing laps his car was going to overheat.

"I didn't know if the engine was going to last. I had faith in it that it would because we build fast cars and they are tough. All those guys in the motor shop and the body shop, they earned their money."

Paul Menard was third and Ryan Blaney was a surprising fourth in the only Ford that could challenge the horsepower from the Hendrick Chevrolets.

Martin Truex Jr. was fifth and followed by Sam Hornish Jr. in another Ford, then Ryan Newman and Kevin Harvick as Chevy drivers took six of the first eight spots.

Denny Hamlin was ninth in the highest-finishing Toyota and Josh Wise rounded out the top 10.

Pole-sitter Jeff Gordon was a disappointing 31st despite a strong race car. He was penalized for speeding on pit road during the final pit stops, and the infraction dropped him to 30th on the restart with 26 laps remaining.

He was unable to work

his way through the field as Earnhardt led a 10-car breakaway, and the second line of traffic struggled

to catch the leaders. He was collected in a last-lap crash that began when Carl Edwards spun.

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SAT 3:00 | 6:00 | 9:00
SUN & HOL 3:00 | 6:00 | 9:00
MON-THURS 4:00 | 7:05
FRI, SAT 4:00 | 7:05 | 10:10
SUN & HOL 4:00 | 7:05
2D VERSION
MON-THURS 5:00 | 8:05 | 9:20
FRI 5:00 | 8:05 | 9:20 | 11:10
SAT 2:00 | 5:00 | 8:05 | 9:20 | 11:10
SUN & HOL 2:00 | 5:00 | 8:05 | 9:20

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NAZANIN BONIADI | FREIDA PINTO
MON-THURS 5:10
FRI 5:10
SAT 2:50 | 5:10
SUN & HOL 2:50 | 5:10

FURIOUS 7
VIN DIESEL | PAUL WALKER
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES PG-13
MON-THURS 5:30 | 7:30 | 8:30
FRI 5:30 | 7:30 | 8:30 | 10:30 | 11:30
SAT 2:30 | 5:30 | 7:30 | 8:30 | 10:30 | 11:30
SUN & HOL 2:30 | 5:30 | 7:30 | 8:30

PAUL BLART: MALL COP 2
KEVIN JAMES | RAINI RODRIGUEZ
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES PG
MON-THURS 4:40 | 6:50 | 9:10
FRI 4:40 | 6:50 | 9:10 | 11:20
SAT 2:30 | 4:40 | 6:50 | 9:10 | 11:20
SUN & HOL 2:30 | 4:40 | 6:50 | 9:10

HOME
JIM PARSONS | RIHANNA
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES PG
MON-THURS 5:00 | 7:10
FRI 5:00 | 7:10
SAT 2:50 | 5:00 | 7:10
SUN & HOL 2:50 | 5:00 | 7:10

GET HARD
WILL FERRELL | KEVIN HART
MON-THURS 5:05 | 7:20 | 9:35
FRI 5:05 | 7:20 | 9:35 | 11:50
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Inked and irked: Apple Watch users report tattoo problems

BRANDON BAILEY
BARBARA ORTUTAY
AP Technology Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — It's an annoying problem for the unlucky few: the Apple Watch's heart rate monitor and even some other features might not work if you have a tattoo on your wrist. Inked and irked Apple fans have dubbed the issue "TattooGate" on Twitter, complaining that they must choose between their body art and their stylish gadget. Apple, for its part, acknowledged the issue on its support website. "Permanent or temporary changes to your skin, such as some tattoos, can also impact heart rate sensor performance," the site reads. "The ink, pattern, and saturation of some tattoos can block light from the sensor, making it difficult to get reliable readings."

Several watch owners complained about the problem on social media this week, even posting videos that show the watch working well on an undecorated wrist, but repeatedly locking or pausing when worn on an arm with a tattoo. Some said it appeared the watch's screen-lock feature was triggering because the sensors thought the watch was not sitting on their wrist. That was frustrating and "a bit embarrassing" for Graham Edgell, a Los An-



In this Friday, April 10, 2015, file photo, a customer tries on Apple's new watch at a store in San Francisco. The Apple Watch's heart rate monitor might not work if there is a tattoo on the wearer's wrist.

geles printing broker who loves Apple products and was eager to show off his new watch to friends after his wife bought it for him. Edgell, 38, said he thought a software glitch was interfering with the watch's message notifications and other features, until he heard about others having trouble with their tattoos. Edgell solved his problem by moving the watch further down on his wrist, away from the dark floral tattoo that stops just above the cuff of his shirt sleeve. "When it was on the tattoo, it was as if it had lost connection with my skin," he said. "Now it's absolutely fine."

The watch tracks heart rates through a common medical technique that measures how much light is absorbed by blood. An Apple representative referred a reporter to the company's website, which explains "Apple Watch uses green LED lights paired with light-sensitive photodiodes to detect the amount of blood flowing through your wrist at any given moment. When your heart beats, the blood flow in your wrist — and the green light absorption — is greater." While the problem doesn't occur with all tattoos, it may be more likely to affect people with dark red or black ink on the side of

the wrist where they wear their watch, according to anecdotal accounts.

"So far it's not been an issue," said Nick Borelli, a 34-year-old marketing executive in Cleveland. He has a black tattoo on the inside of his wrist — but not the side where he has worn the Apple Watch. He added that he likes the watch but worries the glitch could affect a large "target demographic" of young, tech-savvy people with tattoos, who are likely to be interested in the watch as a gadget and fashion accessory.

The same problem may affect other fitness bands that use that method. At least

one tattooed owner of a Fitbit device posted a similar complaint on the Reddit online forum in January. In a statement, a Fitbit representative didn't address that complaint directly but said that with all heart-rate monitors, "accuracy is affected by personal physiology, location of wear, and type of movement."

If tattoos can interfere with the way light is absorbed through the skin, there so far doesn't appear to be a problem with dark skin or scars. Some experts say natural skin pigmentation wouldn't block the green light used by Apple, although researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, have found dark skin can affect the results of blood oxygen sensors that use infrared light. The tech industry has confronted problems with skin coloring in the past. Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard both fielded complaints several years ago about facial recognition sensors in gaming consoles and computers that struggled to detect people with dark skin. Both companies suggested poor lighting interfered with the sensors' ability to measure the contrast between eyes and other facial features.

As for the Apple Watch issue, some social media users have mocked it as a complaint from spoiled hipsters. □

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Warren Buffett defends practices and showers advice at meeting

JOSH FUNK

AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Berkshire Hathaway share-

\$23 billion deal that was followed by thousands of job cuts. Now Berkshire and 3G are buying branded food

of the company that accounted for 45 percent of the manufactured homes sold nationwide last year.



Berkshire Hathaway Chairman and CEO Warren Buffett is surrounded by shareholders and news media as he tours the exhibit floor before presiding over the annual shareholders meeting in Omaha, Neb., Saturday, May 2, 2015. More than 40,000 people attended the shareholder meeting. The crowd filled an arena downtown and several overflow rooms to listen to Buffett and Berkshire Vice Chairman Charlie Munger.

(AP Photo/Nati Harnik)

holders always celebrate Warren Buffett at the annual meeting, but amid the praise Saturday, investors also questioned a couple of the conglomerate's recent business moves.

Buffett marked 50 years of leading Berkshire Saturday by spending hours answering questions alongside Vice Chairman Charlie Munger before an overflow crowd of more than 40,000 people from around the globe.

The sentiment at the meeting was overwhelmingly positive, and Buffett was again surrounded by a mob of admirers as he toured the product booths in the morning. But the two men faced pointed questions about Berkshire's association with the cost-cutting 3G Capital investment firm and about the lending practices at the company's manufactured home unit.

Berkshire teamed up with the Brazilian investors at 3G two years ago to buy ketchup maker Heinz in a

giant Kraft Foods. Several shareholders questioned whether the cost cutting and restructuring methods 3G employs fit with Berkshire's model of buying good companies and allowing them to continue largely unchanged.

"We've never said companies should employ more people than they needed," Buffett said.

Both Buffett and Munger operate with tiny staffs of less than 30.

"We need our businesses to be right-sized," Munger said.

Clayton Homes, is receiving scrutiny because of a recent story by The Seattle Times and The Center for Public Integrity that questioned its lending practices. The story cited examples of high interest rates and customers who felt misled because they didn't realize the lender they were dealing with was owned by Clayton.

Buffett came ready with slides of Clayton homes statistics for his defense

"Clayton follows a pattern that is exemplary and rather extraordinary," he said. Buffett said Clayton retains most of its mortgages after it lends to buyers, so it loses money if buyers default. The manufactured homes Clayton builds in a factory and brings to a site appeal to many people who can't afford other options.

"I make no apologies whatsoever for Clayton's lending terms," Buffett said. After Buffett's comments, a spokesman for The Center for Public Integrity, William Gray, said the group and The Seattle Times stand behind their original Clayton story.

Shareholder James Wilbur said he and his wife drove from Seattle to Omaha because they wanted to experience the event while the 84-year-old Buffett and 91-year-old Munger are both still around.

Despite Buffett's age, many investors remain confident in the company's future even after its top two executives are gone. □

Fair Game: Hidden Fees Take a Toll on Pensions

G. MORGENSON

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Partnership agreements outlining private equity firms' practices are as closely guarded as the recipe for Coca-Cola. Indeed, when it comes to secrecy, few industries do it better than private equity. To outsiders, the lucrative business of borrowing money, buying companies and hoping to sell them later at a profit is as impenetrable as a lockbox. Rates of return and hidden costs are difficult to identify, even for investors in these deals.

While top-line fees associated with these funds are well known - management typically charges investors 1 to 2 percent of assets and about 20 percent of portfolio gains - many charges are hidden from view. These include transaction fees, legal costs, taxes, monitoring or oversight fees, and other expenses charged to the portfolio companies held in a fund.

Those undisclosed charges are a meaningful drag on returns.

How meaningful? Very, according to a recent report by CEM Benchmarking, a Toronto-based consulting firm specializing in pension fund performance analysis.

It estimated that more than half of private equity costs charged to U.S. pension funds were not being disclosed.

CEM concluded that the difference between what funds reported as expenses and what they actually charged investors averaged at least 2 percentage points a year. For a \$3 billion private equity portfolio, that would add up to \$61 million.

And this estimate, CEM acknowledges, is probably low. It comes from Dutch pension fund data, and Europeans pay far less to private equity firms than pension funds in the United States typically do, investment experts say.

A 2007 academic paper that was updated in 2009 and published in The Journal of Economic Perspectives points to far larger costs in private equity funds. The paper, "Beware of Venturing Into Private Equity," by Ludovic Phalippou, a professor at the Saïd School of Business at Oxford, found that the average private equity buyout fund charged more than 7 percent in fees each year.

Some pension beneficiaries may find it shocking how many fees in their funds' investments are undisclosed.

But it does not surprise Curtis M. Loftis Jr., the state treasurer of South Carolina. For years, Loftis has been pushing for more transparency regarding costs levied on the private equity and hedge fund investments overseen by his state's \$30 billion Retirement System Investment Commission.

"It's a mammoth undertaking to understand the complexity of these costs, especially in private equity," Loftis said in an interview. "We've hired a third-party administrator to try to validate fees and expenses, and after more than a year and three months, they still don't have a handle on them all." One reason the South Carolina pension fund's costs are so difficult to assess is that it relies more heavily than the typical pension fund on complex investments in hedge funds, real estate and private equity. According to Loftis, who is a member of the investment commission, those holdings account for 47 percent of the retirement system's assets. That's more than double the 21 percent median holding of such investments by pensions nationwide, according to the National Conference on Public Employee Retirement Systems.

Continued on Page 27

When Good News Is No News



GAIL COLLINS
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There are times, in our national political conversation, when the good news is so pathetically puny that it actually makes you feel worse.

Like speculation that if things go really well this spring in Washington, Congress may be able to keep the Highway Trust Fund from going bankrupt. Or that New York's State Legislature might be able to pass some reforms, were it not distracted by a potential indictment of the Senate's majority leader.

It gives you the same sensation you might feel if your house was flattened by a tornado and the insurance company called to assure you that they're replacing the porch light.

This brings us to Wednesday's Supreme Court ruling on judicial elections.

I know "judicial elections" is possibly not the topic you were hoping for. However, this is truly exciting news:

The nation's top court has decided that it's OK for the state of Florida to prohibit judicial candidates from calling up people who are likely to have business before their court and asking for contributions.

The majority opinion stressed that Florida still allows judges up for re-election to create campaign committees to do their fundraising. Also to write thank-you letters to donors. Chief Justice John Roberts added that it was fine for judicial candidates to "give speeches and put up billboards. They can contact potential supporters in person, on the phone, or online. They can promote their campaigns, on radio, television or other media." Don't want the world to think we're getting carried away.

The reform community was thrilled. This is how low our expectations for clean elections have dropped, people.

"Great news," said the nonpartisan advocacy group Justice at Stake.

"A momentous victory for public faith in the integrity of our judicial system," said an attorney at the Campaign Legal Center.

We are talking here about a 5-4 decision. Four of the nine justices felt this was going too far. Antonin Scalia - what would we do without Scalia? - found the whole idea of restricting judges' ability to hit up trial lawyers for money a "wildly disproportionate restriction" upon judicial candidates'

right of free speech.

"Look, any time we can get a campaign finance victory from this Supreme Court majority, the response should be: hallelujah," said Fred Wertheimer of Democracy 21. Wertheimer has been fighting to get big money out of political campaigns since the beginning of time. And what have you and I done? Zip. So he and his fellow reformers deserve a happy day and the last word. After we sigh a deep sigh.

Roberts provided the swing vote on the decision, an irony not lost on pretty much anybody. It's been Roberts who's led the court in castrating limits on the role of big money in other elections. The difference in this case, he explained, is that "judges are not politicians." While Roberts thinks his own profession needs to appear impartial and above the fray, he appears to feel that there's no need whatsoever for the public to believe that candidates for, say, president of the United States, aren't being swayed by rich donors.

The case was brought by Lanell Williams-Yulee, a plaintiff who you've got to feel at least a little bit sorry for. She ran for a seat on the county court in Tampa and sent out a general appeal for donations, promising to "bring fresh ideas and positive solutions to the judicial bench." It produced no contributions whatsoever. The incumbent walloped her in a primary. And then, to add insult to injury, the Florida Bar charged Williams-Yulee with violating its rule on personal solicitation of donations, recommended a reprimand and ordered her to pay \$1,860 in court costs.

Williams-Yulee argued that her First Amendment rights were being violated. In the real world, the level of public interest in judicial elections is generally so minimal that she'd probably have needed George Clooney, a rock band and several really adorable kittens to attract any voter attention.

There are ways to make the selection of judges better. You could provide public financing, like several states did with a matching fund system that the court ruled unconstitutional in 2011. Or give the whole job of filling the bench to a nonpartisan committee of experts, a process known as "merit selection." Who could be against merit selection? A whole bunch of places, actually.

"In recent years I have been distressed to see persistent efforts in some states to politicize the bench and the role of our judges," former Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said last year.

O'Connor has made merit selection her grand crusade since she retired in 2006. On the one hand, that's a great cause. On the other, her departure triggered the current Roberts era, which then turned our presidential elections into one long dating game between candidates and corporate oligarchs.

But at least it's constitutional to draw a line for judges at the thank-you letter stage. Whoopee. □



On Trade: Obama Right, Critics Wrong



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
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BERLIN - I strongly support President Barack Obama's efforts to conclude big, new trade-opening agreements with our Pacific allies, including Japan and Singapore, and with the whole European Union. But I don't support them just for economic reasons. While I'm certain they would benefit America as a whole economically, I'll leave it to the president to explain why (and how any workers who are harmed can be cushioned). I want to focus on what is not being discussed enough: How these trade agreements with two of the biggest centers of democratic capitalism in the world can enhance our national security as much as our economic security.

Because these deals are not just about who sets the rules. They're about whether we'll have a rule-based world at all. We're at a very plastic moment in global affairs - much like after World War II. China is trying to unilaterally rewrite the rules. Russia is trying to unilaterally break the rules, and parts of the Arab world and Africa have lost all their rules and are disintegrating into states of nature. The globe is increasingly dividing between the World of Order and the World of Disorder. When you look at it from Europe - I've been in Germany and Britain the past week - you see a situation developing to the south of here that is terrifying. It is not only a refugee crisis. It's a civilizational meltdown: Libya, Yemen, Syria and Iraq - the core of the Arab world - have all collapsed

into tribal and sectarian civil wars, amplified by water crises and other environmental stresses.

But - and this is the crucial point - all this is happening in a post-imperial, post-colonial and increasingly post-authoritarian world. That is, in this pluralistic region that lacks pluralism - the Middle East - we have implicitly relied for centuries on the Ottoman Empire, British and French colonialism and then kings and dictators to impose order from the top-down on all the tribes, sects and religions trapped together there. But the first two (imperialism and colonialism) are gone forever, and the last one (monarchy and autocracy) are barely holding on or have also disappeared.

Therefore, sustainable order - the order that will truly serve the people there - can only emerge from the bottom-up by the communities themselves forging social contracts for how to live together as equal citizens.

And since that is not happening - except in Tunisia - the result is increasing disorder and tidal waves of refugees desperately trying to escape to the islands of order: Europe, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq's Kurdistan region.

At the same time, the destruction of the Libyan government of Moammar Gadhafi, without putting boots on the ground to create a new order in the vacuum - surely one of the dumbest things NATO ever did - has removed a barrier to illegal immigration to Europe from Ghana, Senegal, Mali, Eritrea, Syria and Sudan. As one senior German official, speaking on background, said to me: "Libya had been a bar to crossing the Mediterranean. But that bar has been removed now, and we can't reinvent it." A Libyan smuggler told The Times' David D. Kirkpatrick, reporting from Libya, now "everything is open - the deserts and the seas."

Here's a prediction: NATO will eventually establish "no-sail zones" - safe areas for refugees and no-go zones for people-smugglers - along the Libyan coast.

What does all this have to do with trade deals? With rising disorder in the Middle East and Africa - and with China and Russia trying to tug the world their way - there has never been a more important time for the coalition of free-market democracies and democratizing states that are the core of the World of Order to come together and establish the best rules for global integration for the 21st century, including appropriate trade, labor and environmental standards. These agreements would both strengthen and more closely integrate the market-based, rule-of-law-based democratic and democratizing nations that form the backbone of the World of Order.

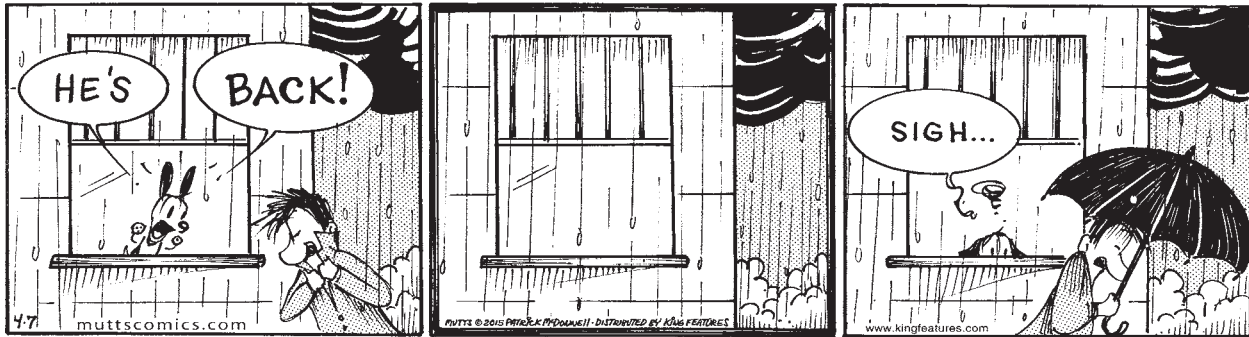
America's economic future "depends on being integrated with the world," said Ian Goldin, the director of the Oxford Martin School, specializing in globalization. "But the future also depends on being able to cooperate with friends to solve all kinds of other problems, from climate to fundamentalism." These trade agreements can help build trust, coordination and growth that tilt the balance in all these countries more toward global cooperation than "hunkering down in protectionism or nationalism and letting others, or nobody, write the rules."

As Obama told his liberal critics: If we abandon this effort to expand trade on our terms, "China, the 800-pound gorilla in Asia will create its own set of rules," signing bilateral trade agreements one by one across Asia "that advantage Chinese companies and Chinese workers and ... reduce our access ... in the fastest-growing, most dynamic economic part of the world." But if we get the Pacific trade deal done, "China is going to have to adapt to this set of trade rules that we've established."

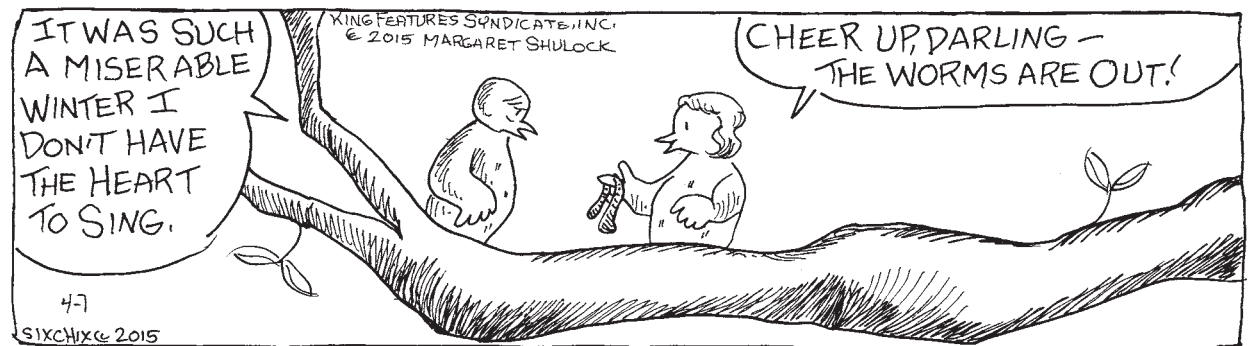
If we fail to do that, he added, 20 years from now we'll "look back and regret it."

That's the only thing he got wrong. We will regret it much sooner. □

Mutts



6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

6			7		9		8
		1	2		3		
9							1
9	2			6	7		
				5			
		7		8			9
4						8	
		3			6	5	
6		9		4		7	

Difficulty Level ★★

4/07

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

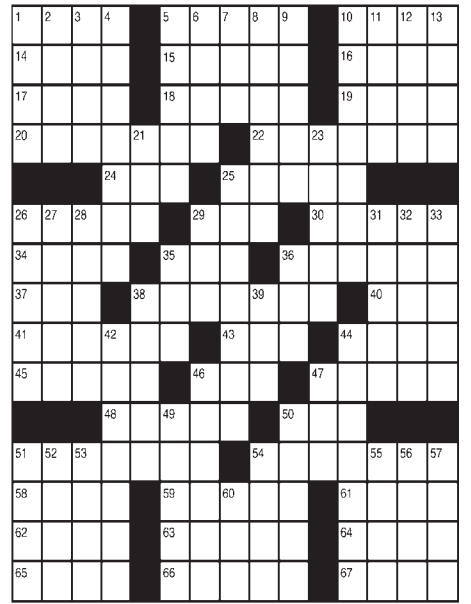
9	4	1	3	7	5	6	8	2
6	7	5	2	8	1	4	3	9
2	3	8	6	4	9	5	7	1
8	5	9	7	1	2	3	6	4
3	1	4	8	5	6	9	2	7
7	2	6	4	9	3	8	1	5
5	9	7	1	3	8	2	4	6
1	6	3	9	2	4	7	5	8
4	8	2	5	6	7	1	9	3

ACROSS

- Tools with teeth
- Come __; follow
- Sulk
- Cincinnati, __
- Tiny pimento-stuffed fruit
- Microwave __
- Pleat
- Summarize
- Put in the mail
- Georgia's capital
- Gobi & Mojave
- Split __ soup
- Postpone
- Shining
- __-and-breakfast inn
- Lunch & dinner
- __ suey; Chinese dish
- Head of a state; abbr.
- Pamper; spoil
- Dobbin's dinner
- Actress Gilbert
- "Nowhere __"; Beatles song
- Tooth coating
- Luau garland
- Long car, for short
- Dinner course
- Allow
- Stringed instrument
- Added booze to, as punch
- Little lie
- Large ape
- Weapon stockpile
- Very excited
- Proverb
- Tabula __; blank slate
- Element whose symbol is Fe
- Wild brawl
- Apple tablet
- Brooklyn team
- Squeeze
- Deadly snakes
- Hit TV series
- Military award
- __ up; arrange
- Speaks ill of
- Neighbor of Sierra Leone
- Director; head
- Malia, to Sasha
- Vise
- Lets loose
- Make progress
- Villain
- Cheer
- Gets older
- Siestas
- Urgent letters
- Youths
- Drink in a stein

DOWN

- Couch



Monday's Puzzle Solved

OTTER	WRAP	ADAM
WHERE	JOTA	SODA
LEANS	RAMP	SOAK
SELECTED	EMERGE	
SUED	DRESSER	
ROTTEN	BUSES	
AMI	DEREK	KODAK
PIES	TILES	RACE
STRAW	VISIT	SHY
MELEE	RASHES	
WAVELET	RENO	
AGENDA	BANKROLL	
CARE	DEAL	ERNIE
KISS	EARL	ROCKS
ONES	RUBY	SWEET

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4/7/15

Fair Game

Continued from Page 24

Certainly, these complex and sizable holdings have raised the South Carolina pension fund's expenses. While not a complete assessment, costs identified by the state last year were \$468 million, or 1.56 percent of assets. The median pension fund paid 0.57 percent of assets, by comparison. South Carolina is far ahead of most other states, however, in trying to determine every nickel in fees that it's incurring in its private equity holdings. The state investment commission hired CEM Benchmarking to conduct an analysis; that assignment created the basis for the consulting firm's new study about disclosure failures nationwide. Loftis said private equity firms had been able to obscure their costs partly because of fuzzy accounting rules. The Governmental Accounting Standards Board states that investment-related costs should be reported as expenses if they are "separable from investment income and the administrative expense of the pension plan." This, along with the practice of not detailing specific costs for such things as transaction expenses and monitoring fees, essentially lets funds decide which fees are separable, leaving most investors unaware.

J.J. Jelincic, a member of the California Public Employees' Retirement System board since 2010, has often raised the problem of fee transparency in the fund's private equity investments. Jelincic, who before joining the board was on the CalPERS staff for 24 years, said in an interview that being in the dark on fees created problems for the overseers of the \$300 billion pension fund. "You don't think to negotiate on fees that you're not aware you're being charged," he said. "As a trustee I'm really concerned about not knowing what we're paying on private equity. We may be getting a really good deal, we may be getting a really bad deal. I just don't know."

The CEM report also notes that even those cost disclosures provided by many private equity funds are understated. After investors objected to the excessive fees associated with private equity, most firms began to offset some costs, returning a portion of them to fund holders. But such rebates only give the illusion of a fee reduction, CEM said, because those fees are also being charged to the portfolio companies in the fund, reducing the ultimate value to investors.

"There is not a broad consensus within the industry on what is a cost," said Mike Heale, a principal at CEM Benchmarking. "Clearly we think there

should be disclosure and standardized reporting on everything that the investor doesn't get to keep." The new scrutiny on secret fees in private equity is more than welcome, Loftis said. But his experience suggests that private equity firms won't open up more without a tough fight.

"South Carolina has come a long, long way," Loftis said. "But the average pension plan out there does not have a guy like me hounding them. I wish every treasurer would speak up or every investment commission would speak up. Every pension plan in the nation is paying too much, and it's being hidden." □

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Bird flu virus raises questions scientists working to answer

DAVID PITT
 Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) —

It's been five months since the H5N2 bird flu virus was discovered in the United States, and producers have lost 21 million birds in central states alone. Yet, researchers acknowledge they still know little about a bird flu virus that's endangered turkey and egg-laying chicken populations that supply much of the nation.

Scientists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other federal agencies are puzzled by the H5N2 virus' spread — even amid heightened biosecurity measures — and apparent lack of widespread deaths in largely unprotected backyard flocks.

"At this point, we don't know very much about these viruses because they've only recently been identified," Dr. Alicia Fry, the CDC's leader of the influenza prevention and control team, said. "We're following the situation very

closely because this is something we're continuing to understand."

The current H5N2 virus surfaced last winter in Canada and was first identified in the United States in early December, when it was found in a wild bird on the West Coast. This spring, the virus was found in poultry operations in eight Midwest states, forcing commercial producers to kill and compost millions of turkeys and chickens in Iowa, Minnesota and elsewhere.

Scientists speculate that perhaps rodents or small birds, seeking food, tracked the virus into barns. Maybe it's the work of flies, as the bird flu virus has been found on the insects in a Pennsylvania outbreak in 1983 and in Japan in 2004. The USDA's chief veterinarian even floated the idea last week wind may be blowing dust and feathers carrying the virus from the barnyard into buildings through air vents.

"To me, the main concern is the disease is moving even with heightened biosecurity," said Richard



Workers in protective clothing work at a hen farm in Jefferson County near Lake Mills, Wis., Friday, April 24, 2015. There are two avian flu outbreaks in Jefferson county. The virus is lethal to birds, but is not expected to be a risk to people or the food supply.

Associated Press

French, a professor of animal health at Becker College in Worcester, Massachusetts. "Ideally we've got to try and figure out the way it's most likely moving and try to put controls in place to stop that." Poultry farms' biosecurity measures include changing clothes and boots before entering barns, disinfecting equipment and vehicles before they approach the barns and assigning workers to specific barns.

As new operations are infected almost daily, USDA epidemiologists also are trying to determine whether the virus came from a wild bird or could have spread from poultry in another barn or a nearby farm.

"We are continuing to evaluate how facilities become positive because we also want to be cognizant of any potential risk of lateral spread from farm to farm," said Dr. T.J. Myers, the USDA associate deputy administrator of veterinary services. "We are doing those evaluations as we speak and we really don't have enough data to report on that yet." Another puzzling question has been why there hasn't been a surge in infections of backyard flocks. The USDA has identified 12 cases including five in Washington in January and February, plus others in Idaho, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Oregon and Wisconsin. Cases might not be reported, French said, not-

ing that commercial operations have a financial incentive to immediately report illnesses because the government pays them for each live bird that must be destroyed. Plus, French said, outdoor chickens could have been exposed over time to low pathogenic versions of bird flu and have developed stronger immunity.

One belief held by researchers will soon be tested: whether the virus will die as temperatures warm up and ultraviolet light increases. With temperatures this week in the 70s in many of the affected states and even warmer weather expected soon, infections should decline if that assumption is true. □



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'Avengers' sequel is second biggest U.S. opener of all time

LINDSEY BAHR
AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Avengers are mighty, but not enough to beat themselves. The Marvel and Disney sequel earned a staggering \$187.7 million in its debut weekend, making it the second biggest U.S. opening of all time according to Rentrak estimates Sunday.

But "Avengers: Age of Ultron" failed to top the all-time record of the first film's \$207.4 million debut in 2012.

Although "Ultron" was the only new film in wide release this weekend, it had some significant small screen competition: The Kentucky Derby, the NBA playoffs, and the Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao fight.

Numbers could shift by the time Monday actuals roll in, but it seems the robust counter-programming may have blockaded another record for Marvel and Disney.

Still, for Disney's head of distribution Dave Hollis, the weekend was a "spectacular result" for the film, which cost a reported \$250 million to produce.

Playing on 4,276 screens, the audiences for "Ultron's" debut were 59 percent male and 41 percent under the age of 25.

"We're in rare air here," said Hollis. "Having the second biggest opening weekend in the history of the movie business is always going to be something you walk away overwhelmingly happy with. The momentum of the brand for Marvel at this point is really something to



This photo provided by Disney/Marvel shows, Robert Downey Jr. as Iron Man/Tony Stark in the film, "Avengers: Age Of Ultron."

Associated Press

take a step back and admire."

Marvel and Disney now boast the top three opening weekends of all time with "Avengers" and its sequel taking the top two slots and "Iron Man 3" in third place.

Hollis said this is "confirmation" that these films are "bringing a completely different kind of filmmaking to cinema. They're creating events and characters and building worlds in a way that is drawing the attention of huge crowds."

Rentrak's Senior Media Analyst Paul Dergarabedian

agreed that the failure to top the first film is "in no way" a disappointment.

"You have to put this into perspective. Considering the level of competition this weekend in the sporting world, it shows that movie going holds its own against all other options," he said.

Also, while the first film's \$207.4 million haul might just seem like a new benchmark to hit, Dergarabedian was quick to point out that opening above \$200 million was "literally like breaking the box office sound barrier."

Instead of a new industry

standard, a \$200 million opening might continue to be an industry rarity.

"Ultron's" future success is not in doubt either.

"These other options were single events. 'Avengers' has a very long playing time. This is a journey to \$1 billion and beyond," he said.

With \$168 million in interna-

tional sales this weekend, "Avengers: Age of Ultron" has grossed \$627 million globally in just 12 days. The film has yet to open in China and Japan.

The rest of the top five was populated with holdovers, "The Age of Adaline," "Furious 7," "Paul Blart: Mall Cop," and the animated "Home." □



New project in U.S. South promotes music “triangle”

ADRIAN SAINZ

Associated Press

CLARKSDALE, Mississippi

(AP) — Blues. Jazz. Country. Rock n’ roll. Gospel. Southern Gospel. Cajun-zydeco. Soul/ R&B. Bluegrass.

Nine of America’s most well-known music genres now have their own road map.

Led by Nashville preservationist Aubrey Preston, a group of historians and music lovers have come up with the “Americana Music Triangle.”

Stretching from Nashville to Memphis to New Orleans — and encompassing points in between — the triangle includes locations in the South that contributed to the birth of the musical



Roger Stolle, owner of Cat Head Delta Blues & Folk Art store, talks about how a new project called the “Americana Music Triangle” will help attract tourists and spur music-related preservation efforts on Thursday, April 30, 2015 in Clarksdale, Miss.

Associated Press

genres, from Clarksdale, Mississippi, the home of blues masters Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker, to Muscle Shoals, Alabama, site of the famed music studio where Aretha Franklin, the Rolling Stones and many others recorded songs.

Destinations are connected by the so-called “Gold Record Road,” a 1,500-mile (2,400-kilometer) stretch of highway made up of Interstate 40 from Nashville to Memphis, Highway 61 — the Blues Trail — from Memphis to New Orleans, and the Natchez Trace Parkway from Nashville to Natchez, Mississippi. Travelers planning road trips can use a flashy website, or web “guide,” pinpointing destinations in the triangle and describing points of interest in more than 30 communities in Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas.

Preston hopes the triangle gives traveling music lovers, both foreign and domestic, a multi-state, Internet-based, interactive guide of the cradle of America’s music, while also spurring enough interest for

community leaders to preserve these spots for future educational and tourism opportunities. State and local tourism officials hope much-needed dollars flow into their towns from travelers with cash to spend on restaurants, music shows, shops, and even gas stations and car washes.

“We’re giving an anchor, a cloud of information ... that’s easily accessible and connects places, stories, people and music to information that people can get from any place in the world,” said Preston, whose last-minute purchase of Nashville’s legendary RCA Studio A in October 2014 saved it from being torn down.

Events scheduled on Monday and throughout next week in six cities will launch the Americana Music Triangle.

Historian Colin Escott says the triangle accurately spotlights locations that will draw people to the South: The jazz halls of New Orleans, the rock n’ roll and soul studios of Memphis, the cotton plantations of the Mississippi Delta.

“People do seem to want to touch something that’s real,” said Escott, co-writer of the book and musical “Million Dollar Quartet” and contributor to the triangle project. A city of about 17,200 about 1 ½ hours’ drive south of Memphis, Clarksdale has seen its share of population loss, poverty, troubled schools and blight, like other small towns in the triangle.

But, in recent years, the city has tried to boost its agriculture-driven economy with tourist spending and the sales taxes it generates. Downtown has seen an increase in restaurants and accommodations like loft apartments, and population appears to be growing. Tourists from overseas are making more frequent treks to Clarksdale, according to Mayor Bill Luckett and co-owner of Ground Zero Blues Club. “Pulling this project off will be a tremendous help to this whole region,” Luckett said. □

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